

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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LAND DONATION TO BECOME SEVILLETA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE IN NEW MEXICO

Interior Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton announced today the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service has accepted the donation of a large tract of land in New Mexico to be designated and administered as the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge.

The land was donated by the Campbell Family Foundation of Albuquerque, New Mexico, founded by Thomas D. Campbell. The grant passed through the Nature Conservancy and was conveyed simultaneously to the Interior agency.

The Nature Conservancy is the only national conservation organization whose resources are solely devoted to the preservation of ecologically and environmentally significant areas.

The parcel, containing some 220,000 acres, is located in Socorro County about 65 miles south of Albuquerque.

Lying along both banks of the Rio Grande and stretching east and west into the desert highlands, this vast expanse, encompassing the original land grant of the King of Spain in 1819, embraces one of the last undeveloped and essentially unspoiled complexes of desert grasslands and brushland vegetation remaining in New Mexico's Rio Grande Valley. The area also is rich in historic significance.

Noting that this tract represents the largest acreage ever donated to the National Wildlife Refuge System, Secretary Morton said that management would be oriented to habitat restoration and preservation with emphasis on scientific investigations in the fields of biology, ecology and geology. "The American people are being presented a unique opportunity to preserve and study the natural processes of plant and animal succession in this special ecological community," he said.

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